



## **Creating Balance (Life & Music)**

*Habits to create a sustainable artist project (music business) while balancing life commitments.*

Contrary to popular belief there is no one size fits all method to develop a sustainable career as an artist. Unlike most professions where individuals attend some form of schooling, gain accreditation and then step into a job that pays a wage, developing an artist project into a career has no real pathway and quite often depends on artists to put in a lot of resources before seeing any meaningful return.

Balancing work, school, family & social commitments while developing an artist project can quite often take a toll on individuals as there is no set path or key metrics for success. The purpose of this article is to discuss ways to create balance and actually manage all of what life throws at artists.

This topic generally comes under a lot of fire, thanks largely to the 'hustlers' and the 'motivation gurus' because the messages they discuss / share can come across as condescending and have very little context attached to it. The work until you drop methodology has been adopted by many and can often lead to issues like burn-out or people falling out of love with their processes & passions. On the complete other end of the spectrum, in the age of social media and ultimate convenience, the amount of distractions that are available to take up valuable time are everywhere. So before fully diving into this article it's important to be clear that establishing a healthy balance between your life and your work to maximize your happiness should be of key importance. We have not, and will never say that your artist project should come at the expense of happiness, because that's the reason artists do what they do in the first place.

Below we have listed a few things to consider when trying to develop sustainability with your artist project while balancing other aspects of your life. A lot of what we are writing about comes from personal experience and some are things that we continue to do daily.

### **Understand that everyone is different. Comparison is your enemy:**

A common issue we see within the mindset of artists (particularly independent artists) is that they continuously compare their journey to others with no real context other than through the (somewhat) toxic lens of social media. At the end of the day, each artist has different priorities, goals, expectations, insecurities and experiences and we see all too often that comparison can lead artists down a negative path when trying to gain their own sustainability. As mentioned above, there is no one size fits all method when it comes to building a sustainable project, so understanding that everyone else's journey is different is a key factor in developing a stable mindset around growth.

We often encourage artists to take time off social media or unfollow anyone they feel they are comparing or mindlessly copying. This can improve original creativity as well as enhance artist productivity.

### **Understand your priorities (Life & Music). Control the chaos:**

Outside priorities will always be there, whether you're a globally renowned artist touring the world or a local that works 2 jobs while balancing a university degree, life always hands out pressures to individuals

in different ways. We often come across artists that struggle to balance their personal, professional and artist worlds, often completely ignoring one to focus on another and spiraling under the weight of priority pressure.

We are certainly not claiming to be experts in this field, and often get it wrong personally, but we feel as though its important to note that understanding why your priorities are priorities and putting habits into action that will help you remain consistent across all areas of your life are important.

*“When I had my artist project, I generated very little income and worked 2 jobs to get by (not including the artist project) all the while juggling relationships with friends and family (who I barely saw), university (which I really struggled with) and ultimately, the development of Cartel as well. At one point for about a 6 month stretch, we were getting up at 4am and working until 10pm at night just to fit everything in, and that was very unhealthy for me. It was never easy and I quite often became overwhelmed. Everyone copes differently, and if artists want to develop a meaningful career, you will create ways to cope.. The way to do it is by understanding what’s actually important to you and putting structures in place to balance yourself.”*

- Anthony Agostino (Co Founder Cartel Management Australia)

What is most important is to ensure that you are living a happy life. If your priorities include things that do not overly fulfill some happiness for you then its time to re-evaluate. In saying that, balance doesn’t mean forgetting about your artist project and coming back when you feel like it (if you want a career).

### **Understand the difference between personal and artist finances:**

A major part of developing an artist project that is sustainable is to understand and action pathways to monetize their project. We recently published an article titled [Understanding Finances](#), which delves deep into creating financial pathways for artists' projects, and what to think about when taking those steps. Put simply, substantial money via royalty payments, touring, brand deals, syncs, publishing etc are all generally the last thing to fall into place. The reality is, that artists will have to work that second job, they will have to balance other commitments, they may often have to incur a loss financially to proceed in their career, and the money that they earn for a sustained period of time will be very low if anything at all.

The goal for artists at an independent level should actually marry up with their personal lives, for example, X artist works in retail and earns a specific amount of money a week. For the artist project to grow, it requires some form of financial investment from that paying job in retail. The focus from there should be to build the artist project to become self-sustaining (i.e; the money earned from the artist project, pays for all the artist expenses).

A lot of artists miss developing structures around self sustaining and continually invest personal money, hoping for that big multi million dollar paycheck to roll in. This is a dangerous and unmeasurable way to build a career as an artist.

1. Invest personal money to pay for “important” artist expenses (*Be sure to be frugal here, if you don’t have it, don’t spend it, we live in an age where you can learn to do most things yourself for free*)
2. Build to more recurring payments based on your strengths (*More in [Understanding finances](#)*)
3. Have the goal of artist profit to pay for artist expenses (*Ensure you are consistently streamlining, if something is to expensive / not worth it change it*)

4. Continue to invest if necessary / you want to but now you have a self sustaining business and at a time that is advised to you buy your financial advisor (accountant) you can begin paying yourself.

Other things to note re finances / business side: \*Only applicable in Australia\*

- Create an ABN (Australian Business Number)- Information [here](#)
- Understand what type of business the artist project falls under (i.e. Partnership, Sole Trader, Trust etc)
- Understand what you can and cannot claim via tax.
- Do monthly profit and loss + quarterly BAS (if applicable)
- Register For APRA / AMCOS + PPCA
- Understand the differences in royalties , where they come from and when they are paid out.
- Keep record of your statements & invoices.

*(Most of the above is covered in [Understanding finances](#))*

All of the above may sound very technical / not conducive to overall creativity, but it is necessary to create a sustainable project in accordance with Australian law. If you are anything like us and not overly savvy with the above, get support from an accountant, who can help you through, and make it easy for you to understand systems and procedure.

#### **Understand your time & expectations + hold yourself accountable:**

Ultimately, your passion project is as successful as the time that you put into it. If you are putting minimal time in and your expectation is to grow rapidly, then you are creating a situation where only frustration and anxiety can fester. Obviously, not everyone has the same time or routine and it is no one size fits all affair. In our previous article [You are wasting hours in the day](#), we highlight a 24 hour day, allowing 10 hours for work / school commitments outside of the artist project. The point of the article was to highlight that even with those 10 hours and 8 hours of sleep artists still have multiple hours in a day to go about building their projects, it really comes down to habits they create and keeping accountable to those habits.

Holding yourself completely accountable allows you to see whether you are wasting this time. In our often frank discussions with artists who plead that they have not got enough time in the day, we discover that they use this time for other hobbies such as Playstation, Netflix etc. as well as a good scroll through social media. Although the above is totally normal and not (always) a destructive use of their time, the simple fact that their project has not been taken into account at all is a concern.

This framework allows you quite broadly to spend an ample amount of time to develop AND have time for hobbies to sustain your work / life balance. Accountability falls directly on the shoulders of the individual. It is fine to spend that time on all activities.

#### **Stick to the structures you create:**

We consistently harp on about this, the artist process is EVERYTHING, from creative, to live to awareness, to engagement, every part of the project should have structures attached to allow for growth.

-What do your release rollouts look like? *(More information in our [release plans](#) article)*

-What is your live process (do you need to hire equipment / do you need a band / what are the controllables for every show)?

-What is your plan for DSP's and gaining awareness on streaming *More information in our [Getting Playlists](#) article)*

Every part of your artist project NEEDs to have a process attached to it if you want a career. By doing this it allows artists to actually plan, schedule their time and resources and be able to measure and quantify everything that they do.

*At the end of the day, if you want this to be your job, then act like it..*

### **Value long term consistency over short term gain**

If you've read this far, surely you know by now there is no secret sauce to develop sustainability as an artist and more importantly, nothing happens quickly. If we can leave you with absolutely anything in regards to your personal and artist development, it is to value long term consistency over short term focuses. If we are to be completely honest about 90% of the artists we work with all want the high streams, big paychecks, tours and fame right now. These artists are always left disheartened when they don't get what they are hoping for straight away, and more often than not, they stop creating all together. The ones who do reach those milestones are quite often the ones who utilise their time / resources and band width to develop structures over multiple releases, multiple tours and multiple discussions.

If you want an artist career, you need to develop and stick to long term plans, further to that, their should be quantifiable goals that allow you reach those long term targets. By doing this, it allows artists to, plan ahead, adapt to changes within the industry as well as be able to double down on the things that actually work for the project over a longer period.